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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Farm Population

ESTIMATES
FOR
1955

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE

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FARM POPULATION -- ESTIMATES FOR 1955

The population living on farms in the United States numbered about 22,158,000 in April 1955 (table 1). This figure is not significantly different from the estimate of 21,890,000 for 1954. As farm population estimates are obtained from sample surveys, they are subject to sampling variability. In fact, the indicated increase of 268,000 between 1954 and 1955 is within the range of variability attributable to sampling. ^{1/} Nevertheless, the sample figure for a given year represents the best estimate of the farm population for that year, regardless of the reliability of the indicated change from the preceding year. About the most that can be said of the period April 1954 to April 1955 is that it was apparently a time of little change in the farm population.

The estimates of natural increase and migration shown in table 2 for the year April 1954-April 1955 may be best used in combination with similar figures for other years to measure changes over a several-year period, as has been done in table 3. Data for earlier years may be found in the release "Farm Population - Migration to and from Farms, 1920-54" issued in December 1954. Persons who use these data are not encouraged to interpret literally the indicated changes for a single year.

Changes Between 1950 and 1955.-- The farm population decreased about 3,000,000 between 1950 and 1955. This drop in farm population is a continuation of the longtime downward trend, which by 1955 reduced the number of farm residents to 13.5 percent of the total population.

During the 5-year period approximately 579,000 babies were born annually to women living on farms and about 193,000 farm people died each year (table 3). The longtime movement of people away from farms continued in this period--about 1,564,000 persons left farms for non-farm areas annually. This loss through outmigration was partly offset by an average of about 597,000 persons who moved from nonfarm to farm residences during each year. Thus the change in the farm population between 1950 and 1955 is the result of the net addition of about 386,000 persons annually through excess of births over deaths, and a

^{1/} Even if no actual change in the size of the farm population had occurred between 1954 and 1955, the probability is that in about 6 cases out of 10 the survey would show an increase or decrease by a quantity that is greater than 268,000.

net annual loss by movement to and from farms of nearly 1,000,000 persons. ^{2/} Migration from farms included an average of 198,000 farm men who entered the Armed Forces, and migration to farms included an average of 84,000 who returned from the Armed Forces.

There were only minor changes in percentage distributions of farm population among geographic divisions between 1950 and 1955 (table 1). The relative positions of the divisions remained the same. The South still has approximately half of the farm population, the North Central about a third, and Northeast and the West each has a little less than a tenth of farm population.

The greatest percentage change in farm population between 1950 and 1955 occurred in the South. In the South farm population was 14 percent smaller in 1955 than in 1950. Among the geographic divisions of the South, the West South Central shows the biggest loss. The Northeast and the West show the least change. Each of these regions decreased about 6 percent between 1950 and 1955.

^{2/} The estimates of persons moving to and from farms include persons who have not moved but who were in ~~or~~ out of the farm population because agricultural operations ceased or were begun on places where they were living.

Table 1. - Farm population: Estimates of number of persons, percentage distribution, and percentage change, for the United States, regions, and geographic divisions, April 1, 1955 and 1950

Area	Farm Population					
	Number		Percentage distribution		Percentage change, between 1950 and 1955	Percent
			1955	1950		
	1955	1950				
United States	Thousands	Thousands	Percent	Percent		
	22,158	25,058	100.0	100.0		-11.6
Regions						
Northeast	1,959	2,097	8.8	8.4		-6.6
North Central	7,173	8,005	32.4	31.9		-10.4
South	10,996	12,793	49.6	51.1		-14.0
West	2,030	2,163	9.2	8.6		-6.1
Geographic Divisions						
New England	440	494	2.0	2.0		-10.9
Middle Atlantic	1,519	1,603	6.8	6.4		-5.2
East North Central	3,779	4,092	17.1	16.3		-7.6
West North Central	3,394	3,913	15.3	15.6		-13.3
South Atlantic	4,531	5,055	20.4	20.2		-10.4
East South Central	3,729	4,315	16.8	17.2		-13.6
West South Central	2,736	3,423	12.4	13.7		-20.1
Mountain	815	927	3.7	3.7		-12.1
Pacific	1,215	1,236	5.5	4.9		-1.7

Table 2. - Farm Population: Estimates of number of persons, births and deaths, and movement of persons to and from the farm population for the United States, regions, and geographic divisions, 1954-55

Area	Farm population, April 1, 1955 Thou.	Natural increase			Change through migration and in classification of residence 1/						Farm population, April 1, 1954 Thou.
		Total Thou.	Births Thou.	Deaths Thou.	Net change Thou.	Between farms and nonfarm areas or the Armed Forces 1/			Farm to farm 2/ Thou.		
						Net Thou.	To farms Thou.	From farms Thou.			
United States	22,158	359	543	-184	-91	-91	544	-635	0	21,890	
Regions											
Northeast	1,959	26	44	-18	8	6	56	-50	2	1,925	
North Central	7,173	105	168	-63	-14	-12	182	-194	-2	7,082	
South	10,996	195	284	-89	-102	-99	238	-337	-3	10,903	
West	2,030	33	47	-14	17	14	68	-54	3	1,980	
Geographic Divisions											
New England	440	5	10	-5	1	-1	14	-15	2	434	
Middle Atlantic	1,529	21	34	-13	7	7	42	-35	0	1,491	
East North Central	3,779	55	89	-34	2	3	98	-95	-1	3,722	
West North Central	3,394	50	79	-29	-16	-15	84	-99	-1	3,360	
South Atlantic	4,531	81	118	-37	-43	-37	92	-129	-6	4,493	
East South Central	3,729	68	100	-32	-32	-30	75	-105	-2	3,693	
West South Central	2,736	46	66	-20	-27	-32	71	-103	5	2,717	
Mountain	815	15	21	-6	6	2	27	-25	4	794	
Pacific	1,215	18	26	-8	11	12	41	-29	-1	1,186	

1/ Includes persons who have not moved but who were in or out of the farm population because agricultural operations ceased or were begun on the places where they were living. This type of change was not estimated separately for years since 1939 but is included in the estimates of movement to or from farms depending on the direction of the net difference between the changes from farm to nonfarm and nonfarm to farm residences.

2/ Net change in farm population of regions or divisions due to farm-to-farm movement.

Table 3. - Farm population: Births and deaths, and movement of persons to and from the farm population for the United States, regions, and geographic divisions, annual average 1950-55 1/

Area	Natural increase			Change through migration and in classification of residence 2/					Farm to farm 3/
	Total	Births	Deaths	Net change	Between farms and nonfarm areas or the Armed Forces 2/			Farm to farm 3/	
					Net	To farms	From farms		
United States	386	579	-193	-966	-966	597	-1,564	0	
Regions									
Northeast	27	46	-19	-55	-55	67	-122	0	
North Central	110	178	-67	-277	-275	185	-460	-1	
South	214	307	-93	-573	-571	267	-838	-2	
West	35	49	-14	-61	-65	79	-144	4	
Geographic Divisions									
New England	6	11	-5	-17	-17	19	-37	1	
Middle Atlantic	21	36	-14	-38	-37	48	-85	-1	
East North Central	54	89	-35	-117	-116	101	-216	-1	
West North Central	56	88	-32	-160	-160	84	-244	0	
South Atlantic	86	124	-38	-191	-184	100	-284	-7	
East South Central	75	108	-33	-192	-190	88	-278	-2	
West South Central	53	75	-22	-190	-197	79	-276	7	
Mountain	17	23	-6	-39	-41	32	-73	2	
Pacific	18	26	-8	-22	-25	46	-71	2	

1/ Figures are rounded to the nearest thousand without being adjusted to group totals.

2/ Includes persons who have not moved but who were in or out of the farm population because agricultural operations ceased or were begun on the places where they were living. This type of change was not estimated separately for years since 1939 but is included in the estimates of movement to or from farms depending on the direction of the net difference between the changes from farm to nonfarm and nonfarm to farm residences.

3/ Net change in farm population of regions or divisions due to farm-to-farm movement.

Note on Method of Developing Farm Population Estimates.-- The foregoing tables contain estimates derived from four principal sources: (1) Current Population Surveys of the Bureau of the Census, from which the Census-AMS estimates of the total farm population of the United States are derived; (2) annual surveys of the farm population of the Agricultural Marketing Service from which the geographic distribution and components of change in the farm population are derived; (3) decennial population censuses; and (4) other related data.

Limitations of the Estimates.-- Estimates for the United States presented in this report are based on data obtained in connection with the Current Population Survey of the Bureau of the Census. As the estimates are based on sample data they are subject to sampling variability. According to preliminary computations from the survey, the relative sampling error in the estimated farm population is about 3 percent. The chances are about 68 out of 100 that an estimate of the total farm population from the sample would differ from a complete census by less than this percentage. The chances are about 95 out of 100 that the difference would be less than twice the specified percentage and about 99 out of 100 that it would be less than $2\frac{1}{2}$ times the percentage. As in any survey work, results are also subject to errors of response and nonreporting.

Data for geographic areas are based on mailed questionnaire survey data tied to benchmark figures from censuses and adjusted to total estimates of farm population obtained from the enumerative sample surveys of the Bureau of the Census. The reliability of any geographic area estimate is therefore dependent upon the size of the sample on which it was based and the representativeness of returns from the mailed questionnaire survey. It is also dependent on the correspondence and closeness of the sample and benchmark dates.

Estimates for the geographic divisions that resulted from the mailed questionnaire survey data should be used with caution, particularly those for which the sample was relatively small. Size of sample is important in analyzing components of change in the farm population, especially in appraising any changes that occur from one year to another. The reliability of year-to-year changes is much less than that of trends shown during a period of several years. (See page 1.) Figures for areas that contain relatively large numbers of people with marginal connections to agriculture may be subject to greater error than those for other divisions, even for benchmark dates.

Number of farms reported on in annual mailed questionnaire,
farm population survey, 1955

Area	Farms April 1955
	<u>Number</u>
United States	87,918
Regions	
Northeast	9,075
North Central	39,029
South	30,663
West	9,151
Geographic Divisions	
New England	1,098
Middle Atlantic	7,977
East North Central	14,590
West North Central	24,439
South Atlantic	10,659
East South Central	11,278
West South Central	8,726
Mountain	6,107
Pacific	3,044

States in the geographic divisions are: New England: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut; Middle Atlantic: New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania; East North Central: Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin; West North Central: Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas; South Atlantic: Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida; East South Central: Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi; West South Central: Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas; Mountain: Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada; Pacific: Washington, Oregon, California.

Divisions in the regions are: Northeast: New England, Middle Atlantic; North Central: East North Central, West North Central; South: South Atlantic, East South Central, West South Central; West: Mountain and Pacific.

Related Reports

Among the principal releases of the former Bureau of Agricultural Economics issued since 1939 which contain farm population estimates for geographic areas are:

Farm Population Estimates, United States, and Major Geographic Divisions, 1910-42, November 1942.

Farm Population Estimates, United States, and Major Geographic Divisions, 1910-1946, June 1946.

Farm Population Estimates, United States, and Major Geographic Divisions, 1940-1947, States 1940-1945, August 1947.

Farm Population Estimates, (specified date) containing current estimates issued from time to time.

Estimates in those releases are of historical interest only; they are superseded by the estimates in this report.

Other related reports include "Farm Population, Annual Estimates by States, Major Geographic Divisions, and Regions, 1920-50 ... and for the United States, 1910-50" and "Farm Population...Migration to and from farms, 1920-54," prepared in the Agricultural Marketing Service. These reports contain estimates comparable to estimates in this release. The cooperative releases of the former Bureau of Agricultural Economics and the Bureau of the Census in Farm Population, Series Census-BAE, now called Census-AMS (P-27), contain current estimates of the distribution of the total farm population of the country by age, sex, labor force status, and other related material.

Farms and Farm People, a special cooperative report of the former Bureau of Agricultural Economics and the Bureau of the Census, contains data on the characteristics of the population in farm-operator households by economic class of farm (based on 1950 Censuses of Population and Agriculture), as well as a discussion of the definitions of farm population and farm-operator household population. The various Censuses of Population publications of the Bureau of the Census contain detailed data on the characteristics and geographic distribution of the rural-farm population. In addition, certain of the Current Population Reports, particularly those in Series P-20, P-50, and P-60, published by the Bureau of the Census, contain current estimates relative to the characteristics of the rural-farm population of the country.

Estimates of the number of persons moving between farms and non-farm areas and of the characteristics of persons making these farm-nonfarm shifts are also published by the Bureau of the Census. The estimates published by the Census differ somewhat from those published by the Agricultural Marketing Service because of the sampling techniques used and concepts involved. The estimates of the Bureau of the Census come from the Current Population Survey and those of the Agricultural Marketing Service are based primarily on data submitted by crop reporters. The Current Population Survey estimates of farm-nonfarm shifts do not include changes of classification from farm to nonfarm or vice versa for persons living in the same house as a year earlier. In the Agricultural Marketing Service series, persons who have not moved but who were included in or excluded from the farm population because agricultural operations were begun or ceased during the year on the places where they were living are included in the estimates of movement to or from farms, depending on the direction of the net difference between the changes to and from farm classification.

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